

REMARKS

Claims 3-7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakabayashi et al. in view of Umemoto et al. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection because the cited references do not disclose or suggest the light guide plate having a curved light reflecting surface opposite the light exit surface. Also, it would not have been obvious to combine the cited references to derive the claimed first and second lighting elements having fine irregularities evenly formed on the light reflecting surface of the light guide plate.

The Nakabayashi et al. reference discloses in Figs. 23A-23C, top surfaces 311 and 312 which have grooves 204 that form a prism-like structure for reflecting light through the opposite surfaces 321 and 322. The reference further discloses that the “portion of the light guide member top surface 231 where no groove 204 is present is referred to as a flat portion 243. The flat portions 243 constitute a part of the top surface 231 that are one plane” (col. 17, lines 59-62) (emphasis added). Thus, the Nakabayashi et al. reference teaches that the light reflecting surface of its light guide member has a flat surface which is interrupted by prism-like grooves.

In contrast, the light reflecting surface opposite the light exit surface of the claimed light guide plate is curved in the present invention. Although Fig. 23C of Nakabayashi et al. shows the top surfaces 311 and 312 being angled with respect to each other, each of the respective top surfaces 311 and 312 have a flat light reflecting surface, as described above. The Umemoto et al. reference also disclose a flat light reflecting surface.

Therefore, the cited references, even if combined, still would not disclose or suggest the curved light reflecting surface opposite the light exit surface of a light guide plate, as in the present invention.

Moreover, one of ordinary skill in the art would not have combined the teachings of Nakabayashi et al. with those of Umemoto et al. to derive the claimed first and second lighting elements having fine irregularities evenly formed on the light reflecting surface of the light guide plate. As shown in Figs. 22A-22E and its corresponding description (col. 18, lines 62 to col. 20, line 19) the grooves 204 of Nakabayashi et al. have slopes 241 and 242 that have a predetermined angle with respect to the flat portions 243 for reflecting light that is passed through the light guide member 203. The angles of the slopes with respect to the flat portions are critical in properly reflecting the light to achieve the desired result. As properly recognized in the Office Action, the Nakabayashi et al. reference does not disclose or suggest fine irregularities that are evenly formed on the reflecting surface of the light guide plate.

If fine irregularities described in Umemoto et al. are formed on the light reflecting surface of the light guide plate as suggested by the Examiner, the irregularities would interfere with or alter the angles of reflection precisely defined by the slopes in the grooves of the light guide member. Therefore, one of ordinary skill in the art working with the teachings of the Nakabayashi et al. reference would not have looked to Umemoto et al. in deriving the light elements having fine irregularities formed on the light reflecting surface, as

in the present invention. The present invention is believed to be allowable for this reason also.

Claim 18 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakabayashi et al. in view of Kashima et al. (US 5,735,590). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection for the reasons similar to those given above traversing the rejection of independent claim 3.

As discussed above, the Nakabayashi et al. reference does not disclose or suggest a curved light reflecting surface opposite the light exit surface. The Kashima et al. reference also does not disclose or suggest a curved light reflecting surface opposite the light exit surface. Therefore, even if combined, the combination still would not disclose or suggest at least this feature of the invention.

Moreover, as discussed above with respect to the combination of Nakabayashi et al. and Umemoto et al., providing a light diffusing element 6 described in Kashima et al. on the top surfaces 311 and 312 of Nakabayashi et al. would interfere with or alter the operation of the slopes in the grooves 204 in reflecting light towards the light exit surface. For this reason, one of ordinary skill in the art would not apply the light diffusing elements to the light reflecting surfaces of Nakabayashi et al. Claim 18 is believed to be allowable for this reason, also. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim 19 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakabayashi et al. in view of Umemoto et al. and Lin. Applicants respectfully traverse this

rejection for the reasons similar to those given above traversing the rejection of independent claim 3.

Similar to claim 3, claim 19 also describes the first and second lighting elements having fine irregularities evenly formed on the light reflecting surface of the light guide plate. As discussed above, one of ordinary skill in the art would not have combined the teachings of Nakabayashi et al. with those of Umemoto et al. to derive the claimed first and second lighting elements having fine irregularities evenly formed on the light reflecting surface of the light guide plate. The Lin reference is cited merely for stacking light guide plates on one another. It does not disclose or suggest the claimed first and second lighting elements. Therefore, even if Lin were combined with Nakabayashi et al. and Umemoto et al., the resulting device still would not disclose or suggest the claimed first and second lighting elements. Accordingly, claim 19 is believed to be allowable over the cited references. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 9, 10, 12 and 13-17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakabayashi et al. in view of Umemoto et al. and other references. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection for the reasons given with respect to claim 3, from which the rejected claims depend, and because of the additional features described in these claims.

For all of the above reasons, Applicants request reconsideration and allowance of the claimed invention. The Examiner should contact Applicants' undersigned attorney if a telephone conference would expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

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